

Toby Macdonald

producer/director

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Curriculum Vitae

I am an experienced, freelance producer and director of documentary films. I also shoot and edit. I have won many awards, including most recently the Champion of Science award from the Association of British Science Writers for *Goodbye Cassini, Hello Saturn*. I am flexible, dedicated and a strong team leader, able to deliver films on time, on budget and to brief. I aim to make films with passion, strong narrative and visual flair – great stories, beautifully told.

Broadcast Credits

Babies director

Nutopia for Netflix • 2 x 60mins • 2019 • Executive Producer: Sara Brailsford

This is the first foray into science television by Netflix. It's an epic 12-part series about the development of babies during their first year. I am directing the first two episodes about Bonding and Sleep. The films are strongly focused on the life, work and inspiration of some of the leading scientists in the field of baby development. *In production*

Horizon: Die a Better Death writer/producer/director/camera

BBC Studios for BBC2 • 60mins • 2018 • Executive Producer: Steve Crabtree

We are all going to die, and yet no one wants to talk about it. Presented by Dr Kevin Fong, the film explores whether we have lost sight of death as a natural and dignified process, and how palliative care can help us all die a better death. We meet people who are facing an imminent death as they share the most intense and highly-charged moments of their lives - accepting mortality, stopping invasive treatment, learning to live life as well as possible, right to the end.

Horizon: Goodbye Cassini, Hello Saturn writer/producer/director

BBC Factual for BBC2 & The Science Channel • 60mins • 2017 • Executive Producer: Steve Crabtree

After 13 years orbiting Saturn, the spacecraft Cassini plunged to a fiery death, becoming part of the very planet it had been exploring. The film follows the final phase of the mission, meeting the engineers and scientists who have dedicated decades of their lives to this extraordinary voyage of exploration.

WINNER: Champion of Science Award – Association of British Science Writers Awards 2018.

FINALIST: 2018 Jackson Hole Science Media Awards

The Day the Dinosaurs Died writer/director

Barcroft Media for BBC2 and PBS NOVA • 60mins • 2017 • Executive Producer: Aidan Laverty

66 million years ago an asteroid crashed into the Gulf of Mexico. But how did a bad day in Mexico turn into a global annihilation, wiping out not just the dinosaurs all round the world, but also 75% of life on Earth?

Presenters Alice Roberts and Ben Garrod follow an expedition to drill into the crater to discover the truth of the worst day in the history of life on Earth.

The Secrets of Your Food writer/producer/director

BBC Factual for BBC2 • 3 x 60mins • 2016/7 • Series Producer: Gideon Bradshaw

A series exploring the science behind our food, presented by Michael Mosley and James Wong. I directed an episode on Taste – exploring how our tastes have shaped the food we eat and help us decide what to put in our mouths. Is it food, poison or just plain yum?

Horizon: Cosmic Dawn – The True Moment of Creation writer/producer/director

BBC Factual for BBC2 & The Science Channel • 60mins • 2015 • Executive Producer: Steve Crabtree

Forget the big bang. The real moment of creation is the Cosmic Dawn. It's the moment the first stars were born, the moment that lit up the Universe, and made the first ingredients of life. Astronomers are searching for the ghosts of the first ever stars.

Forces of Nature development producer

BBC Factual for BBC1 • 4 x 60mins • 2014 • Series Producer: Danielle Peck

Forces of Nature is a landmark series for BBC1 presented by Brian Cox, looking at the science that has shaped some of the most beautiful and dramatic features of our planet. I worked on the episode about *Colour*, developing story ideas and scripting the film.

Horizon: Secrets of the Solar System writer/producer/director

BBC Factual for BBC2 & The Science Channel • 60mins • 2014 • Executive Producer: Steve Crabtree

It's a miracle our Earth is here at all. One of the biggest mysteries in astronomy is beginning to unravel. With Earth-shattering evidence from alien planets, astronomers are rewriting the history of the Solar System. It's time for a brand new model.

Horizon: How You Really Make Decisions writer/producer/director

BBC Factual for BBC2 • 60mins • 2013 • Executive Producer: Aidan Laverty

As a species we like to think we're pretty smart. And yet we consistently make irrational and predictable mistakes. The film explores the battle between intuition and logic within the human mind, a battle that affects all our decisions – whether we realise it or not.

Horizon: What Makes Us Human? writer/producer/director

BBC Factual for BBC2 • 60mins • 2013 • Executive Producer: Aidan Laverty

Professor Alice Roberts, pregnant with her second child, investigates what separates us from our closest living relatives. We share 99% of our DNA with chimpanzees and yet from the moment of birth, our lives are completely different. What it is about our bodies, genes and brains that sets us apart from our furry cousins?

Horizon: How Small Is The Universe? writer/producer/director

BBC Factual for BBC2 & The Science Channel • 60mins • 2012 • Executive Producer: Aidan Laverty

A journey down the biggest rabbit hole in history. The film charts the hunt for the very smallest piece of the Universe. A whirlwind of strings, multiple dimensions and quantum foam.

Horizon: The Truth About Exercise writer/producer/director

BBC Factual for BBC2 • 60mins • 2012 • Executive Producer: Aidan Laverty

Michael Mosley investigates the science behind exercise. Using himself as a human guinea pig, Michael discovers that some people will not get any fitter however much they exercise. And for others, all they need is just three minutes a week.

The Sex Researchers edit producer/writer

WAG TV for C4 • 2 x 50mins • 2011 • Executive Producer: Martin Durkin

Two in a series of three films delving into the history and contemporary investigations of sex researchers - documenting their triumphs and disasters.

Classic Goldie writer/producer/director/photography

BBC Classical Music for BBC2 • 2 x 60mins • 2009 • Executive Producer: Oliver Macfarlane

Two observational documentaries following the drum n bass pioneer Goldie as he composes a piece of orchestral music for the Proms. An intimate portrait of an artist in a collision of two worlds.

Natural Wonders: Grand Canyon & Great Barrier Reef writer/producer/director

Impossible Pictures for Discovery HD Theater • 2 x 50 mins • 2007/8 • Series Producer: Will Aslett

Two of a series of six films exploring the geology of natural wonders of the world. The life story of the Grand Canyon and the story of the formation of the Great Barrier Reef.

The Whale That Swam to London writer/director

Firefly for C4 • 50 mins • 2006 • Executive Producer: Nick Curwin

The story of the Thames whale leads into a bigger, more intriguing science story about the mysteries of whales and the seascape of planet Earth as it appears to them.

Discovery Atlas: France Revealed writer/director

Wall to Wall Television for Discovery HD Theater • 100 mins • 2005 • Executive Producer: Jonathan Hewes

Part of a landmark series of 20 feature length documentaries. An epic and cinematic portrait of France, told through eight different documentary stories.

Life Before Birth (In The Womb) writer/producer/director

Pioneer Productions for C4 & National Geographic • 100 mins • 2005 • Executive Producer: Stuart Carter

A unique vision of the odyssey from conception to birth. A fetus'-eye view of the transformation from a single egg into a complex creature capable of smiling, recognizing its mother's voice, and even dreaming.

WINNER: Best Special Effects, RTS Craft Awards 2005

NOMINEE: Best Science & Natural History Film, RTS Awards 2006

WINNER: Remi Special Jury Award, WorldFest Houston 2006

BBC Young Musician: What Does it Take? writer/producer/director/photography

BBC Classical Music for BBC2 • 90 mins • 2004 • Executive Producer: Oliver Macfarlane

Feature length observational documentary following the competitors in the BBC Young Musician of the Year competition. An intimate portrayal of the ambition, the talent, the work, and the pressure experienced by some of the Britain's most gifted performers.

Flashers Uncovered writer/producer/director

Mentorn TV for Channel 4 • 50 mins • 2004 • Executive Producer: Nick Curwin

Flashing is the most common of all sexual crimes. 50% of women in the UK can expect to be flashed at some time in their lives. Flashers Uncovered meets the flashers, the psychologists, and the victims, and seeks to reveal the damaged roots of this menacing behaviour. Controversial, uncomfortable and compulsive.

Mysterious Hanging Coffins of China writer/producer/director

Bang Productions for Discovery HD Theater • 50 mins • 2003 • Executive Producer: Keiko Bang

In the remote mountains of Southwest China, precarious hanging coffins are all that remain of the mysterious Bo people. The film follows a team of archaeologists into the unexplored depths of Yunnan.

WINNER: Best Documentary, Asian TV Awards 2004

Extreme Machines: Oil Rig writer/producer/director

Pioneer Productions for Discovery HD Theater • 50 mins • 2003 • Executive Producer: Stuart Carter

Charts the progress of the Eirik Raude offshore rig as it leaves the safety of Halifax Harbour in Nova Scotia to begin drilling for oil in treacherous waters. The first HD documentary produced in the UK for Discovery.

Edge of the Universe – Final Frontier writer/producer/director

Pioneer Productions for Channel 4 • 50 mins • 2002 • Executive Producer: Stuart Carter

The very latest in cosmological thinking. Follows the launch of a satellite that could finally tell us the shape and size of the Universe. Filmed on location in Chile, Florida, Australia and Tenerife.

WINNER: Gold Special Jury Prize, WorldFest Houston 2003

Poison! writer/producer/director

Survival Anglia for C5 and Discovery • 50 mins • 2001 • Executive Producers: Mike Scott, Petra Regent

This film peels back the skin of some victims of deadly attacks to find out how and why animals such as the Taipan, the Black Widow, and the Box Jellyfish have particularly deadly weapons.

*Credits from the Twentieth Century include **Gardeners' World** and **Real Gardens** (both presented by Monty Don), **The Art Club** (presented by Bettany Hughes and Tim Marlow), **The Pier** (presented by Bettany Hughes, Chris Packham and Simon Fanshawe). Details are available on request.*

Training & Education

Open University

I am currently studying part-time for a degree in Physics.

National Film and Television School

Postgraduate 3 year course in film making. Graduated in 1992. While at the NFTS my tutors included Jiri Menzel, Jim O'Brien, David Puttnam and Jan Fleischer.

University of Durham

I studied Anthropology, Psychology and Maths, graduating with a BA (class II) in 1986. While at Durham, I founded the Durham University Film Unit and directed my first films.

King's College School, Wimbledon

3 'A' Levels: Chemistry (A) Physics (A) Maths (A1)

Reviews of “Life Before Birth”

“Life Before Birth is genuinely fascinating...amazing...a spectacular sight...magic on screen.” *The Observer*“

Mesmerising and hugely informative....Life Before Birth abided, more or less entirely, by Lord Reith’s three central tenets of broadcasting – it informed, educated and entertained.” *The Daily Telegraph*🔗🔗

“The fabulous Life Before Birth. It was a documentary so utterly beautiful and informative as to deserve being issued to every school in the land.... a masterpiece of a film.” *Glasgow Herald*

“Mesmerising and compelling.” *The Guardian*

“A cool, beautiful movie.” *New York Times*

“Breathtakingly beautiful in parts and wondrous in its revelations.... fabulous, informative, thought-provoking stuff.” *The Sunday Times*

Professional Memberships

Member of Directors UK

Graduate of the National Film and Television School

BECTU